avoid wasteful expenditure and control its growth. The Railways have been taking number of austerity/economy measures a list whereof is given below:

(1) Improving staff productivity by better manpower planning

(2) Better asset utilization

(3) Inventory management

(4) Control over fuel consumption through energy audit for bringing improvement in specific fuel consumption

(5) Prioritization of expenditure on works/activities for better use of available resources, etc.

Besides the above, austerity is maintained in the areas of administrative and office expenditure like hospitality, commercial advertisement and publicity, air travel, overtime allowance in offices, etc.

Rail Tariff Regulatory Authority

1299. SHRI MATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission has emphasized the need for setting up of a Rail Tariff Regulatory Authroity to regulate business segment of the Railways;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what measures the Railways are taking to develop the rail infrastructure with the help of private partnership?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Setting up of Rail Tariff Regulatory Authority was included in the Tenth Five Year Plan Mid-Term Appraisal Document. However, Ministry of Railways is of the view that there is no need for setting up of separate Authority as the proposals for adjustment in Railway fares and freight rates included in the Railway Budget are debated and approved by the Parliament.

(c) Following measures have been taken to develop rail infrastructure with the help of private partnership:

(i) Formulating Guidelines for encouraging public-private partnership.

(ii) Framing Policy on Rail side warehousing scheme.

(iii) Initiating action for formation of Rail Land Development Authority.

(iv) Setting up Rail Vikas Nigam Limited for construction and development of Rail Infrastructure.

CAG report on railway bridges

1300. SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that C&AG in its Report No. 9 of 2003 pertaining to Railways has stated that large number of existing railway bridges are between 80 to 100 years old and were constructed to handle only lighter standard of loading than prevalent, i.e., there has been tremendous growth of load both in freight as well as passenger traffic since the construction of these bridges;

(b) if so, what steps have been taken to strengthen the existing railway bridges to handle heavier load of freight and passenger; and

(c) what steps have been taken to replace these railway bridges?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Yes, Sir. It is a fact that presently about 75,600 bridges out of 1,21,295 bridges are between 80 to 100 years old and were constructed to handle loading prevalent at the time of their construction.

(b) and (c) In case of introduction of heavier axle load in a particular section, thorough study is carried out for suitability of existing bridges. If required, bridges are rehabilitated/rebuilt to hear the heavier axle load of freight/passenger trains.

Repair & Rehabilitation of old railway bridges is a continous process. A well laid down system of multi-tier inspection of bridges is followed in the Indian Railways. The rehabilitation/ rebuilding of the bridges is carried out based on the physical condition as ascertained during inspection and not on the basis of age alone. In case a section is selected for introduction of heavier loads, all the bridges of that section are reviewed and strengthened as per requirement.